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CHAPTER XII

Charles Duncan McIver and His Educational Services, 1886-1906

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CHAPTER XII.

CHARLES DUNCAN McIVER AND HIS EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, 1886-1906.

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The glory of the struggle to which southern educators are called and the prospect of certain victory is such exhilarating inspiration that I feel sorry for those in other sections who have not the opportunity, and for those in our own section who lack inclination or the resolution, to participate in the struggle. (Charles Duncan McIver.)

HIS EDUCATIONAL SERVICES.

Here was a man of transcendent ability to move common men to believe in the saving efficacy of education as the most vitally civilizing force in our national life. Here was a man of large vision and constructive ideals who devoted all his time to unselfish service for his fellows. Here was a man whose sympathy and catholic spirit were broad enough to include all mankind. Here was an elemental man, a product of this generation of southern life rediscovering and re-forming itself, whose consuming ambition was to strive "for the perfection of civilization and the ennobling of democracy."

I. NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS IN 1886.

Twenty years ago North Carolina was spending annually for public elementary schools, rural and city, \$771,719 for 570,000 children. This small sum was divided among more than 6,600 different schools and 6,700 teachers. The physical equipment of these schools, including grounds and furniture and buildings, was somewhat less in value than \$700,000. The average length of the school term was only 60 days out of 365, and the teachers were paid annually hardly \$80 each. At least two-thirds of these elementary teachers were men. The total amount paid for the supervision of all these schools, including the nine towns which then had separate systems of their own, was a little less than \$30,000 for the year; only about \$19,000 of this amount was paid the 96 county superintendents for their services. At that time not a single county superintendent devoted all his time to school supervision on account of the meager salary paid, while less than one-fourth of all the teachers spent longer than three months out of each year in the school room.

Considerably more than one-fourth of the white population in 1886 10 years of age and over was illiterate, while at least 70 per cent of the colored population of the same age was illiterate. There were 23,000 more white female illiterates than white male illiterates.

Some regarded the public schools as a public charity. Some opposed them on the ground that they were purely secular and did not teach morality. Some declared that the public schools were not worthy of patronage. Still others opposed the whole idea of public education because the negro shared in the division of the public funds. In a word, the public schools were satisfactory to no class of people. The leading churches were then and later actively opposed to State support of higher education, because they held that the State, by such support, would enter into unfair competition with the sectarian colleges already established.

The University of North Carolina, partially and meagerly aided by the State, had been in existence for a century, but its advantages were not open to white women. There was no State-supported institution or endowed college in which a white woman could obtain higher education. The cost of higher education for a white woman at the then existing women's colleges ranged from \$250 to \$450 a year, twice the cost of education for a man at the State university and the endowed denominational colleges. And there was no State normal school of any kind for training white teachers, only an imperfect and unsatisfactory system of so-called summer normals of four weeks' duration.

What public school system there was in 1886 had been developed since 1870, while the State was yet suffering from the grinding poverty and social disorganization occasioned by the civil war and reconstruction. The battle cry of the dominant political party during these years was "white supremacy and low taxes." There were no public men of conspicuous ability who advocated increasing school taxes as the only means of increasing the efficiency of all the schools of all the people. In 1881 a law which permitted school districts to levy local school taxes by each race on its own property for the benefit of its own schools was passed. But even this measure, enacted to allay the supposed race prejudice of the whites against increasing taxes for negro schools, did not meet with great popular favor, for when the law was declared unconstitutional by the North Carolina supreme court in 1886, the white people of less than a score of towns and country districts had availed themselves of its provisions.

Such, in brief, were educational conditions in North Carolina which produced Charles D. McIver and that group of educational leaders and statesmen of his time. Their knowledge of these conditions impelled them to do the most unselfish and important public service undertaken during their generation. The story of their work for

North Carolina in broadening vision, for the moral and intellectual uplift of the people, and for engendering noble aspirations for the future can not be told here, nor can the story of their faith and courage in proclaiming the education of all the people as the only means of spiritual and economic freedom be fully emphasized. A mere outline of their work shall suffice.

II. NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS IN 1905.

North Carolina is now spending \$1,955,776 on her elementary schools, \$1,426,552 on her rural schools, and \$529,224 on her town and city schools. This is \$1,184,057 more than was spent for elementary schools twenty years ago. Instead of 6,600 schools and 6,700 teachers in 1886, North Carolina now has 8,193 schools and 9,687 teachers. Instead of \$700,000 worth of school property, she now has school property valued at \$3,182,919. Each teacher is now employed on an average of 88 days out of 365 instead of 60, and receives annually \$136.29 instead of \$80. The 97 county superintendents now receive \$53,024 instead of \$19,000, and many of them are now able to devote all their time to the schools. The whole amount spent for supervision is now \$110,016 instead of \$30,000. Local taxes are now levied in 63 towns and cities instead of 9, while 354 country districts levy special local school taxes. There were no country local tax districts in 1886. The general State school tax is now 18 cents on each \$100 valuation of property instead of 12½ cents. And every leader of the people, in whatever walk of life, is sincerely sorry these figures are not many times larger and the opportunity our schools afford for the training of our 700,000 children many times greater.

The State University now receives considerably more than twice the State aid it received twenty years ago. In addition, the State now largely supports an agricultural and mechanical college for each race, a State normal and industrial college for white women, two small white normal schools for both sexes, and three colored normal schools for both sexes, all at an annual cost of \$131,000. Church opposition to higher education has passed away, and both political parties now pledge themselves to the most liberal educational policy. A public man who opposes raising more money for schools is an exception. More is now said during the political campaigns in North Carolina about education than about all other public questions combined. There is now an organization of women in nearly every county whose aim it is to beautify country school houses and grounds. There are now libraries of good books in more than 1,500 country schools, with a healthy public sentiment at work to make it impossible for any school to be much longer without such a prime necessity. And finally, the illiteracy figures of twenty years ago have been reduced to at least half

what they were then, while there are well-defined movements looking to compulsory school attendance and to the strengthening and better enforcement of the present child-labor laws.

Thus the record stands when put into cold statistics. But the influence of the revolution in public sentiment brought about by the educational statesmanship which this story reveals has been felt throughout the South. The commanding, compelling leader who should be seen in every line of this inspiring page in the progress of his State from the bondage of individualism toward democracy is Charles Duncan McIver, founder of the North Carolina State Normal and Industrial College and the most effective advocate of universal education since Horace Mann.

III. HOW THE FIRST BATTLE WAS WON.

Charles D. McIver began his life work as a teacher soon after his graduation from the State University in 1881. By 1886 he had become convinced that "the supreme question in civilization is education," and that "the cheapest, easiest, and surest road to universal education is to educate those who are to be the mothers and teachers of future generations." McIver did not discover these two fundamental truths; they discovered him to himself, and they made for him his message to the people he loved. For several generations Murphey, Caldwell, Wiley, and others had preached to North Carolinians the doctrine of the necessity of education. Pestalozzi and other educational reformers had emphasized the education of women as the teachers of the race. But no one had as yet been able to compel North Carolina to heed the message that was to spell the larger freedom of all its people.

It was Doctor McIver's unique distinction to carry to the people of his State three fundamental principles of educational statesmanship and to win for them a favorable popular verdict. These principles were as follows: "The teachers of children must have special training; the State must aid the higher education of women as well as men; the most necessary and expensive thing in the world, except ignorance, is education," and therefore the taxes for public education must be increased. These fundamental democratic principles he accepted as the very essence of educational truth, and he never once doubted that all men would accept them as he did if only they were rightly presented.

It took five years of agitation—from 1886 to 1891—to get a favorable verdict from the people on the propositions involving the training of teachers and State aid for the higher education of women. The establishment in 1891 of the State Normal and Industrial College meant nothing less than that the people of North Carolina had been convinced that teachers ought to be trained for their responsible work

and that the State ought to aid the higher education of women. During these years of agitation Doctor McIver spoke often on "Female education," "The duty of the people to their schools," "The teacher and the people," and "Taxation for schools," and held county institutes in all parts of the State. The North Carolina Teachers' Assembly and the late State Superintendent Finger rendered valuable assistance. But the most effective means used to secure the establishment of the State Normal College was the educational campaign which Doctor McIver and Dr. Edwin A. Alderman conducted in connection with their county institutes from June, 1889, to June, 1892. These institutes were held in nearly all the 96 counties. They lasted five days each. The final day was devoted to educational campaign speaking. An effort was made to have all the school officers and as many other citizens as possible attend these meetings on the final day of the institute. Never before had the people heard the subject of education so ably and attractively presented as it was presented by these two incomparable educational advocates. The people heard not flattery nor the glorification of a dead past. Instead they heard of the shame and blighting effects of illiteracy; they heard a new doctrine of the spiritual and economic meaning of education; they heard how necessary it was that the teachers of little children have the best training for the most important work of civilization; they heard how for a century the State had been aiding men to secure the blessings of higher education and denying the same privilege to women; and they heard for the first time in their lives men plead that taxes be raised instead of lowered. This campaign marked a new epoch in North Carolina history, for it was a campaign without appeal to race prejudice, without appeal to dead issues; it was a campaign free from the quarrel words of the past; it was an appeal for broader vision. It was a campaign the only weapons of whose warfare were persuasion and love; it was a campaign in which the only possible reward of those who waged it was the consciousness of an unselfish civic service performed primarily in the interest of little children. The appeal to the people was successful; the State Normal College was established; and the man who had done most to mold public sentiment in its favor, Charles D. McIver, was made its first president.

IV. LEADER OF THE SOUTHERN EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN.

The story of the founding and the growth of this college is the story of the growth of public educational sentiment in North Carolina during the past twenty years. The unique popular educational campaign which established the college and which revolutionized public thinking on the subject of education has continued to this day. The college, under the guidance of its president, has ever been the most vitally helpful and active educational force, standing for democratic

ideals of culture and civic service. It has constantly disseminated educational enthusiasm, and has been the means of enlarging more and more the numbers of those whose ideal is to stand for larger educational opportunity for all the people.

As "the city set on a hill can not be hid," so the altruistic spirit of the educational work in North Carolina soon attracted wide attention in the South and gave courage to many other southern men and women to undertake similar tasks. By 1900 kindred spirits throughout the North recognized the national value of the educational work being done in the South by many educational leaders and statesmen. It did not take long to formulate cooperative plans. At Winston-Salem in April, 1901, there was a conference of the ten educational workers and their friends. Doctor McIver suggested a platform of cooperative principles. The platform was a call for an educational campaign. The Southern Education Board to conduct the campaign was formed. The man who had been waging educational warfare in North Carolina for fifteen years was made the chairman of the campaign committee of the board. Then was actively begun throughout the South a face-to-face discussion which aimed to reach the hearts and consciences of men and persuade them to provide larger educational opportunities for their children. And again the weapons of battle are persuasion and love. The appeal to men is for broader vision and higher taxes; their reward, economic and spiritual freedom for their children. The whole meaning of this wonderful movement can not be expressed in more epigrammatic form than in the following words of its master spirit, Doctor McIver: "I know that the angels must rejoice over one civic sinner who repents of his selfishness and hatred of taxes and becomes an enthusiastic supporter of universal education by taxation."

This campaign has taught many men, North and South, to lay aside some outworn prejudices; it has given new hope and inspiration to those statesmen of the South who are convinced that education of the right kind is the only means of spiritual and economic freedom; it has been a potent influence in creating patriotic sentiment; and, finally, it has brought hope and courage to many a humble teacher struggling to tempt the young fledgelings to leave the nest of illiteracy for the purer air of intellectual freedom.

EDUCATIONAL CREED.

No appreciation of McIver's work would be complete without a glimpse at the soul of the man as he stood before the people. He had an inexhaustible fund of illustration, anecdote, and humor. But he impressed no one as a mere "funny man;" he was too intensely in earnest. Imagine, if you can, this man declaring, with all the earnestness of a Peter the Hermit and with wonderful wealth of illustra-

tion: "In a civilized country the value of land and land products is not so great as the value of mind and mind products; ideas are worth more than acres, and the possessors of ideas will always hold in financial bondage those whose chief possession is acres of land;" and you will perhaps be able to understand his power to convince men that "the supreme question in civilization is education." Hear him discuss *The Meaning of Education in a Democracy*:

Education is simply civilization's effort to propagate and perpetuate its life and its progress.

The generations of men are but relays in civilization's march on its journey from savagery to the millennium.

Each generation owes it to the past and to the future that no previous worthy attainment or achievement, whether of thought or deed or vision, shall be lost.

The more we can induce a man to do for himself for his better training the more will he be able to do not only for himself, but for others.

The child is the pearl of great price for whom we can afford to sell all that we have and in whom we can afford to invest it.

Education is not a charity. A boy or a girl can not be pauperized by giving him or her a chance to drudge for a period of fifteen years at the hardest labor ever done.

Let us teach honestly and boldly that education is not only the best thing in our civilization for which public money can be used, but that with the exception of ignorance it is also the most expensive.

Men now seek education, not that they may become leaders in the State and in the church, but, first of all, that they may become strong men; so that to-day seeing a man at college is no indication that he expects to be a preacher or a politician.

Universal education means that every youth should have an opportunity to measure his mental powers in comparison with the mental powers of his fellows, and that he should thus be aided in discovering the work for which he is best fitted, and then that he should have special training for that work.

Before the war no man was allowed to educate a slave, because they said it ruined him and rendered him unfit for work. Education is a hindrance to slavery, and ignorance a necessity to it.

Education can not be given to anyone. It can not be bought and sold. It is as personal as religion. Each one must work out his own mental and spiritual salvation. This is the fact that makes democracy possible. It is the salt that saves the world.

We and our fathers have too often thought of a State as a piece of land with mineral resources, forests, water courses, and certain climatic conditions. The future will recognize that people—not trees and rocks and rivers and imaginary boundary lines—make a State, and that the State is great, intelligent, wealthy, and powerful, or is small, ignorant, poverty stricken, and weak, just in proportion as its people are educated or as they are untrained and raw, like the natural material around them.

TAXATION FOR SCHOOLS.

And this is how he made men see that higher taxation for schools is a necessity:

I know that the angels must rejoice over one civic sinner who repents of his selfishness and hatred of taxes and becomes an enthusiastic supporter of universal education by taxation.

Money is worth nothing without ideas and ideals, and yet ideas and ideals can make little headway in promoting civilization without the sympathy and cooperation of wealth and wealth producers.

The aversion to taxation is due to ignorance of the fact that taxation is simply an exchange of a little money for something better—civilized government. The savage alone is exempt from taxation.

The majority of the schools of the South need and need badly: Better houses and equipment, longer terms, stronger teachers, and more effective supervision. Reducing these needs to a common denominator, we have four distinct calls for more money. Not only is it a call for more now—one time—but for all time.

We have heard in ancient days that it is robbery to tax Brown's property to educate Jones's children. In the future no one will question the right of the State to tax the property of Brown and Jones to develop the State through its children.

It has been too common a political teaching that the best government is that which levies the smallest taxes. The future will modify that doctrine and teach that liberal taxation, fairly levied and properly applied, is the chief mark of a civilized people. The savage pays no tax.

Can you make Georgia a greater State without making Atlanta greater, stronger, and freer? Is it not the duty of Atlanta and of every other city and community in the Southern States which has found it wise and profitable to levy a special local tax to educate its children to use every possible legitimate means to persuade every other community in the South, large and small, to do the same thing?

EDUCATION OF WOMEN.

Doctor McIver believed that universal education was somehow intimately connected with the proper education of women. He was never more irresistible than when he declared:

The cheapest, easiest, and surest road to universal education is to educate those who are to be the mothers and teachers of future generations.

An educated man may be the father of illiterate children, but the children of educated women are never illiterate.

The proper training of women is the strategic point in the education of the race.

Men have had the exclusive management of court-houses and largely the exclusive management of schoolhouses, and upon both the marks of masculinity and neglect are plainly visible.

Educate a man and you have educated one person; educate a mother and you have educated a whole family.

Not a shadow of doubt has ever dimmed my faith in the final wisdom and justice of the people of the State, and I look with confidence to an early day when they will invest in the training of white women at least as liberally as they do in the training of white men, colored men, and colored women.

The chief factors of any civilization are its homes and its primary schools. Homes and primary schools are made by women rather than by men.

For every dollar spent by the government, State or Federal, and by the philanthropists in the training of men, at least another dollar should be invested in the work of educating womankind.

Many of the States established their State college for men nearly a hundred years ago, and after a century's development along the line of masculine tastes and needs, those in authority seem to think that if, without modifying the courses of study in the slightest, they decide to admit women, it is a mark of great generosity and progress.

The wife and mother is the priestess in humanity's temple and presides at the fountain head of civilization.

We could better afford to have five illiterate men than one illiterate mother.

I have yet to find the ambitious man who is suffering in his mind because he is not allowed to become a student at a woman's college.

An educational qualification for matrimony would be worth more to our citizenship than an educational qualification for suffrage.

A Southern woman once told me that she had decided to use her money to aid in the education of boys and men—that her husband was a man!

ILLITERACY.

The burden of our illiteracy formed a part of every public address which he made. Some of his epigrammatic utterances on this subject are well worthy to live:

Ignorance and illiteracy cost more than education.

North Carolina's two ancient enemies—illiteracy and hostility to taxation.

There is no comfortable place in civilization for men and women who can not read and write. The instances to-day of extraordinary successes among illiterate people are rarer than genius itself.

In a section where one-third of the population above 10 years of age can not read and write, the removal of that handicap is the very first public question with which our Christian benevolence and statesmanship must deal.

I have heard people talk as if industrial education were possible for illiterate people. Just as well talk of a law school or a medical college for illiterates.

THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS.

Doctor McIver held that the teacher is the most useful member of our society, and that he must be trained:

The school-teacher is our most important public official.

The teacher is the seed corn of civilization, and none but the best is good enough to use.

The person who builds citizens and shapes the character and thought of the young is worth more to society than the man who builds houses and molds iron.

Those who teach the young are civilization's most powerful agents, and society everywhere ought to set apart and consecrate to its greatest work its bravest, its best, its strongest men and women.

The teachers of this country must learn to become tactful mixers with men and active agitators for more liberal educational investment.

We have passed away from the time when the old woman, being asked how many children she had, replied: "Five—two living, two dead, and one teaching school."

We are laboring under the delusion that we can save money by employing low-priced teachers. North Carolina and all other States still regard a carpenter or an ordinary laborer with very little skill as deserving better annual compensation than is paid to our elementary teachers who are the builders and sustainers of our civilization.

The school-teacher should be not only the teacher of the youth of his community, but also the most influential adviser on all matters of legislation that pertain to schools and the rearing of children into useful citizenship.

It is the business of teachers to hand down from one generation to the next the best that their own generation can do and know and be and dream. They are the seed corn and none but the best and strongest is good enough to be used.

Every community has its hero physician, its hero lawyer, its hero banker or business man, but the hero school-teachers are dead!

A person who has the right kind of education will want other people to have it too. This is the spirit of the true teacher, who, in his heart, must be a genuine philanthropist.

We must not only do our duty in the class room, but let us use our influence as citizens to persuade the men and the women of to-day to discharge their debt to the generation that has preceded them by the most liberal provision for the generation that must take their places.

There are people who seem to think that a little child's time is worth nothing, and waste it by putting it in charge of a teacher without skill and inspiration. Six or seven years of a child's life wasted means sixty or seventy years of effective manhood or womanhood wasted.

A weakling can not train boys and girls into great men and women whose education has economic value. We must have masters as teachers.

There are people who are as naturally avaricious in regard to helping others see truth as others are naturally avaricious in a pecuniary way. They would, if possible, get up a corner in knowledge and keep it from the rest of the world in order to gain power for themselves.

I do not want my children taught geography by a person who has never been outside of the Congressional district in which she is teaching. I do not want my children to be taught the relation between capital and labor by a man or a woman who never expects to see more than \$150 or \$200 capital for a year's salary.

Of all the skilled workers in the world the teacher is probably the only one who is ever refused the privilege of selecting the tools with which he will work or the weapons of his own warfare. I have seen text-books decided upon by a committee, not a member of which had been in a school for twenty years, and the committee's only influential adviser seemed to be a lawyer who was paid an attorney's fee to give the advice. Imagine, if you can, carpenters allowing brickmasons to select their tools, or fishermen allowing field hands to determine for them the character of their fishing tackle or the bait that shall be used!

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP.

Of educational leadership he said:

Aggressive educational statesmanship among teachers and public officials is the need of our time, and every Southern State that has not developed such leaders will do so within the next five or ten years.

The county superintendent should be a man who can win the confidence of the intelligent, lead the ignorant and illiterate, and give hope and inspiration to plodding men of mediocre ability and position. In argument on general questions, he should be able to hold his own with the strongest professional or commercial men he may chance to meet; and in the discussion of educational questions he ought to be more than a match for them. He ought not to be a mere examiner of teachers or a gatherer of statistics.

HIS IDEAL OF A COLLEGE.

Doctor McIver's ideal for a great and useful college was thus expressed:

The love of truth for truth's sake; the belief in equality before the law; the belief in fair play and the willingness to applaud an honest victor in every contest, whether on the athletic field or in the class room or in social life; the feeling of common responsibility; the habit of tolerance toward those with whom one does not entirely agree; the giving up of small rights for the sake of greater rights that are essential; the recognition of authority and the dignified voluntary submission to it even when the reason for the policy adopted by the authority is not apparent; the spirit of overlooking the blunders of others and of helping those who are weak; the contempt for idlers and shirkers; the love of one's fellow-workers, even though they be one's rivals; patience in toil; self-reliance; faith in human progress; confidence in right; and belief in God—these are the characteristics of the atmosphere of a great and useful college.

SOME PERSONAL PREFERENCES.

Some personal preferences he phrased thus:

I'd rather be a what's-what than a who's-who!

I am not a prophet. I prefer history to prophecy, and I prefer the work of the present as a preparation for the future to either.

When a man is on the right road it is not of great importance whether he be at one point or another. The direction in which he is moving and the rate of his speed are the important questions.

I would rather be a healthy man at the foot of the mountain advancing steadily and with the upward look of hope and faith than to be a corpse on the peak, or the blasé traveler who has gone over the entire road and is slowly descending while possessed with the delusion that he is standing still on the summit.

BIOGRAPHICAL.

Born in Moore County, N. C., September 27, 1860; died near Hillsboro, N. C., September 17, 1906. Student at the University of North Carolina September, 1877, to June, 1881. Awarded Greek medal at university; won honors in French and Latin; graduated with B. A. degree. Taught in public and private schools of Durham, 1881-1884; cast his first vote at Durham in May, 1882, in favor of a local tax to establish the Durham public schools. Taught in the Winston public schools, 1884-1886. From September, 1886, to June, 1889, he taught in Peace Institute, Raleigh. State institute conductor and chairman of North Carolina Teachers' Assembly Committee on Education 1889-1892. President of the State Normal and Industrial College 1892-1906; member of the Southern Education Board and chairman of its campaign committee 1901-1906; member of the National Educational Association and of the National Council of Education. He was president of the North Carolina Teachers' Assembly, 1892, and of the Southern Educational Association, 1905. Married Miss Lula V. Martin, of Winston, in 1885. Held the honorary degrees of Litt. D. and LL. D. from University of North Carolina, conferred June, 1893, and June, 1904.

